DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 194 466 SP 016 835

AUTHOR Parsons, James B.; Dillon, David
TITLE "Substitute" Student Teaching: A Project for Enhancing the Student Teacher's Professional Growth.
PUB DATE 78
NOTE 17p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Classroom Techniques; Cooperating Teachers; *Curriculum Enrichment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Field Experience Programs; Higher Education; Part Time Faculty; Preservice Teacher Education; Program Development; Student Attitudes; *Student Teachers; *Substitute Teachers; Teacher Employment; *Teaching Experience

ABSTRACT

Substitute teaching should be a common topic for university teacher education courses. Many new teachers will use substitute teaching as a route toward gaining a full-time position. A program is described in which student teachers participated in actual substituting experiences. A relatively simple procedural switch of students was arranged late in the student teaching period after student teachers had assumed a major responsibility for the instruction within their classrooms. Principals and cooperating teachers were fully informed of the objectives and practices of the switch. The student teachers were given directions concerning the kind of information to leave for their substitute, such as lesson plans, timetables, and procedural information. On the day of the actual switch, faculty consultants visited the schools involved to be on hand in case of questions or problems. In the final stage of the project, student teachers and cooperating teachers filled out evaluation forms concerning the project, and each faculty consultant met with his group of student teachers to share experiences and answer questions. The success of this project led to the conclusion that substitute teaching can be an important aspect of preservice teacher education, helping student teachers understand some of the problems involved both in leaving and taking over a class. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED194466

SP

"SUBSTITUTE" STUDENT TEACHING:

A PROJECT FOR ENHANCING THE STUDENT TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL GROWTH

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
James B. Parsons

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

James B. Parsons, Assistant Professor
Department of Secondary Education
University of Alberta

David Dillon, Assistant Professor
Department of Elementary Education
University of Alberta

Recently, we gave members of our Secondary Social Studies Curriculum and Instruction courses an opportunity to express their feelings about substitute teaching. The directions asked students to write a four or five sentence paragraph titled "Substitute Teaching." Our students' thoughts generally fell into three main categories. About 58% of all the students had negative things to say about substitute teaching; about 23% of the students chose to give a definition of substitute teaching; and, about 16% chose to say positive things about substitute teaching. About 3% of the students gave suggestions on how to be successful as a substitute teacher.

To be truthful, we were not as surprised by the 58% of the students who had negative feelings as we were by the 16% who could think of good things to say about substitute teaching. Generally, substitute teaching is not given a very high preference rating among possible jobs. For many

SP 016 835

substitute teachers the anticipation of facing new classes of students each day is much like going to the dentist for a root canal and having him tell you that he has run out of pain killer. But, regardless of the negative feelings towards substitute teaching, for a good portion of our student teachers substitute teaching is one way to go about getting a regular, full-time teaching job.

The purpose of this paper is to make two points. Our first point is that substitute teaching is an area that should be given much more discussion in our teacher education institutions. Our second point is that setting up a substitute teaching experience can be rewarding for student teachers.

WHAT IS SUBSTITUTE TEACHING?

Almost everyone has some conception of what substitute teaching is. Almost every student who graduates from high school has had a substitute teacher at least once during his career as a student. The student teachers in our small survey had some interesting definitions of substitute teaching. For example, one student teacher suggested:

> "Substitute teaching is what a teacher does when he or she is unable to get a full-time position but still wants to teach and is willing to forego the salary of a full-time job. Essentially, it is the act of going into a classroom upon about one-to-two hours notice and replacing the regular teacher who is absent due to illness or for various reasons. A substitute teacher must be versatile as he may be teaching anything from Art 10 to Physics 30. Usually his job boils down to a babysitting job wherein he must keep a classroom of 25 to 30 students busy* for the day."
>
> *busy= keep the noise down to a dull roar,
> keep the students out of the hallway.

The expression "baby-sitting" appeared on almost 30% of the responses by our student teachers. One student teacher suggested:

> "To substitute teach is to baby-sit six to eight classes per day. If done too long, you might forget how to teach."

OCT 2 8 1980

Many student teachers, when defining substitute teaching, spoke of their anticipated sense of frustration with the task. About 25% of all the responses spoke of their experiences watching substitute teachers flounder or of being forced to substitute with little guidance. One student teacher expressed his frustrations by stating:

> (Substitute teaching) "is on the spot acting - a job with little or no direction. The main objective often is mearly to keep the class quiet and in order. The phrase "busy work" often describes the main direction of the particular class, although the work likely has no profound effect on the week's general objectives as set out by the regular teacher. Often a useful waste of time."

Another student teacher stated:

> "Substitute teaching involves taking the place of a teacher who is ill or off skiing. This experience is often very nerve racking as the teacher is often put into a situation of not having any lesson plans. They usually have little knowledge of the school's discipline system and are handed a form outlining the code of ethics. They are given a timetable and told to go to a certain room and "teach." The teacher usually ends up reading a book and trying to maintain his sanity."

Another student teacher suggested parsimoniously:

> "Substitute teaching is probably the most difficult job to do well. It is also probably the easiest thing to get away with doing poorly."

On the more positive side, some student teachers looked upon the experience of substitute teaching as a rather challenging alternative. Some of these statements include:

> "Substitute teaching could be very enlightening. It would enable a teacher to visit various schools and meet many people."

> "I think substitute teaching will give me a wide range of experiences in different classes and different schools."

"This can be an enjoyable experience because the substitute teacher must be on his toes and able to make some quick adjustments in his teaching style to meet the new situation."

"Substitute teaching might allow you to be innovative and creative with the students, who won't be prepared to go on with their normal "boring" lessons anyway."

One of the more interesting "positive" responses was from the student teacher who said.

"As a substitute teacher, one would lead a very exciting life because you would never know where you are going or what you are teaching until 7:30 that morning...For this reason I can see it being a great job for a year or two if one enjoys not knowing what will happen next."

Most of the students saw little or no reward in substitute teaching and mentioned several detriments to substituting. Student teachers complained that they were basically an outsider in the classroom:

"The substitute teacher is looked upon by students as a complete stranger."

"The substitute teacher enters the classroom as a foreign element."

Student teachers worried about the lack of plans:

"Many times when a sub comes to a school, the sub knows very little about what to do in class because the teacher has not left a lesson plan."

"Substitutes feel that they are babysitters if a clear lesson plan is not left."

Many of our student teachers expressed a real fear of substitute teaching. Some said:

> "Substitute teaching really does not offer you the opportunity to really develop any talents other than possibly classroom management."

> "The substitute teacher must have a precise, workable method of maintaining discipline and class control. (This method has never been proven to exist.)"

One of our student teachers has already begun to take advice from other people about how to act as a substitute teacher. He suggests that:

> "As put to me by one sub, the only way to survive as a sub is to come down on the students hard as possible in order to get some work done."

Others of our students state that one problem with substitute teaching is that the substitute makes little difference in students' lives because there is no chance to establish rapport with the students. One student states:

> "The students might and usually do feel that the sub teacher has no real purpose."

One student teacher sums up the frustrations of substituting in the following paragraph.

> "Substitute teaching is probably the worst of teaching. It has all the frustrations and none of the rewards. Except for those who substitute for longer periods, substitute teachers never get to know their students, nor they him. In short, a substitute teacher is a caretaker, a babysitter, who never fills a real role in the students' lives."

WHY ATTEND TO SUBSTITUTE TEACHING WITH STUDENT TEACHERS?

One of the biggest reasons that substitute teaching should be discussed in curriculum and instruction courses is simply because most substitute teaching is so terrible. There are few substitute teachers that, as our student teachers suggested, do more than "baby-sit" or give students "busy work." To educate a teacher and watch that teacher successfully complete the often tense student teaching experience only to be a frustrated substitute teacher seems like a massive waste of talent. Yet, in our years of being university students, teachers, and teacher educators, we have never heard of other teacher education courses discussing substitute teaching in any systematic manner. Substitute teaching should be a common topic for university curriculum and instruction courses.

A second reason to include the discussion of substitute teaching in an overall program of teacher education is that many student teachers will use substitute teaching as a route towards gaining a full-time teaching position. One student teacher expressed the situation as follows:

> "One of my several, gorgeous girlfriends has been a substitute teacher...(she) has managed to impress the principal of a school in this city to the extent that she has attained a full-time position this year."

The same student teacher goes on to list the advantages of substitute teaching. He includes in his list:

(1) Impressions
(2) Job advancement
(3) Variety
(4) Ability to experiment with a variety of techniques

In his paragraph, this student teacher also mentions a third reason to include the discussion of substitute teaching in curriculum and instruction courses at the university level.. Substitute teaching offers a wide variety of experiences to the teacher who is doing the substituting. While many students expressed a real fear about going into a different situation each day, often as a "stranger," other student teachers saw substitute teaching as

a way to see many different school situations. These student teachers saw substituting as a means of helping them decide what sort of school they would like to teach in if offered a full-time position.

Some student teachers mentioned what we believe is a fourth reason to include substitute teaching as a topic for discussion. They stated that substituting would allow them the opportunity to experiment with a number of different methods under a minimum of pressure. Most student teachers expressed the belief that no one considered that anything fruitful for students would come out of substitute teaching anyway; therefore, the substitute teacher should feel under little pressure.

We see other positive effects as a result of including a discussion of substitute teaching in a general curriculum and instruction course at the university level. Primarily, we do not believe that substitute teaching should be a wasteland for both students and substitute teachers. If the significant people involved in the substitute teaching experience consider the experience to be worthless, there is great likelihood that the experience will be worthless. If the substitute teacher goes into the situation considering the task to be that of a "baby-sitter" or that he only needs to "survive" by "coming down as quickly as possible" on the students, the experience has little potential for being educational for either the students or the substitute teacher.

HELPING STUDENTS PREPARE FOR SUBSTITUTE TEACHING

In our discussions with student teachers, almost every student teacher can recall significant events in their school lives that involve substitute teachers. Unfortunately, most of these experiences are negative in nature; however, some students do remember substitute teachers who were successful to some degree or another as a substitute. A discussion of <u>how</u> and <u>why</u> some substitutes were successful is a good starting place for helping student teachers analyze the substituting experience. Classes of student teachers, generally within a short time, can identify important characteristics of successful substitute teachers. Some of the characteristics often mentioned are:

(1) Good substitutes are ready to use the teacher's plans but are prepared if no plans are available.

(2) Good substitutes can, usually, supplement the teacher's plans with background knowledge from his own experience. (This ability is often important if the plans left for the substitute are sketchy.)

(3) Good substitute teachers probably consider themselves more than baby-sitters.

There is no doubt that substitute teaching is difficult. However, the experiences of the student teachers themselves suggest that the job is not impossible. Substitute teachers must be prepared for the likelihood that no lesson plan will be left for them by the teacher. They must also be convinced that they are performing a task greater than simply holding the lid on the class until the regular teacher gets back. If substitute teaching is going to serve as a route to a future full-time teaching position, then student teachers should be ready to be successful in the experience.

We discuss substitute teaching in the following order.

(1) Student teachers discuss the kinds of experiences that they recall from their days as students.

(2) During (or after) the discussion, our student teachers suggest reasons why substitute teachers are either successful or unsuccessful.

(3) Student teachers attempt to arrange the characteristics in a rank order from highest to lowest in importance for success.

(4) Our student teachers take the specific criteria and analyze them. (For example, if the class mentions preparation, we discuss how best a substitute teacher can prepare himself.)

(5) Student teachers then list the ways that a particular subject area lends itself to flexibility for substitute teaching. (Social studies, as an example, has a curriculum guide that lists topics for each grade level. Current events is a topic that falls into the jurisdiction of the social studies.)

(6) Student teachers are given the opportunities to prepare to go into the class as a substitute teacher and to leave their class as though they were a teacher.

(7) Student teachers are given the opportunity to substitute teach for each other.

GOING INTO ANOTHER STUDENT TEACHER'S CLASSROOM

To this point, we have discussed a rationale for including substitute teaching on a syllabus for a curriculum and instruction course and suggested a method for dealing with the topic in a systematic way within the university setting. The remainder of the paper will discuss the actual substituting experience. Such a project has been carried out twice in recent years at the elementary level. In both instances, the same general procedures were followed.

(1) A relatively simple procedural switch of students was arranged late in the student teaching period after student teachers had assumed a major responsibility for the instruction within their classrooms. In these original, exploratory switches, students were chosen so that the actual switching would be as simple as possible. We switched with as few faculty consultants as possible, used as few buildings as possible, considered the geographical location of the schools to be switched, used only a short time period for the switch (in one instance ½ day-blocks were used, in the other instance 1 day-blocks were used), and tried to switch student teachers with as similar a student teaching assignment as possible.

In one case, ten student teachers in two schools (five and five) switched assignments for a full day. In the other instance students in three nearby elementary schools rotated assignments for ½ day. In most cases, student teachers were able to switch with the same grade level.

(2) The project was presented to the principals and cooperating teachers of the schools involved by the faculty consultants working in the schools. The presentations consisted of explaining the objectives and the procedures. During the presentation a strong emphasis on the rationale for such a project was explained and measures taken to ensure its success were highlighted (ample directions for the student teachers, evaluations, etc.)

(3) Student teachers were advised of the project and given directions concerning the kind of information to leave for their substitute. This information included such things as lesson plans, time tables, and procedural information (absentee reports, building layout, etc.)

(4) On the day of the actual switch of student teachers, the faculty consultants visited the schools involved to be on hand in case

of questions or problems. We feel now that such activity on the part of the faculty consultants is not necessary since no major problems arose and since we learned about the nature of the experience primarily after it was over through conversations with the student teachers and the cooperating teachers involved in the project.

(5) As a final stage to the project, student teachers and cooperating teachers filled out evaluation forms concerning the project and each faculty consultant met with his group of student teachers to share experiences, answer questions, etc. We feel, at this time, that paired meetings of the two student teachers who switched assignments for the day would be very beneficial. These meetings could provide better summaries to each student teacher of what happened with the substitutions. The student teachers could also, at such meetings, discuss the instructional organization of the classes and their reasons for setting up the class in the particular manner in which they did.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE SUBSTITUTION OF STUDENT TEACHERS

Major objectives for the project were as follows:

(1) that student teachers would learn how to leave their own classroom in such a way that a substitute teacher could satisfactorily fill in for them. This ability was demonstrated by the student teachers leaving information (instructions, plans, instructional materials, etc.) adequate for the substitute to effectively continue the work and routine of the classroom. The nature of this project was not to prepare student teachers to give instruction where no plans were left. Considering the implications of such a different project, this objective (helping the student teachers learn to be successful where no teaching plans are left) is best attended to in the student teacher's own classroom.

(2) that student teachers learn about the instructional model, classroom organization, and specific instructional materials employed in another classroom, not by merely observing the other classroom, but by actually teaching in it with appropriate guidance beforehand.

PROBLEMS TO EXPECT

People who are attempting to set up a substitute teaching experience for their student teachers should expect at least two problems. First, school administration will likely be skeptical. Second, the student teachers will be tremendously anxious about the experience.

In both cases where the experience was set up, school administrations were, at first, skeptical of both the value and the possibility for success of the student teaching substituting. While explanations stating the reasons for setting up such a substituting experience helped to calm much of the skepticism, it was not until the substituting had been successfully completed that some of the skepticism subsided.

Student teachers reacted rather anxiously in both situations. In the first situation, student teachers were not told until two days prior to their actual substituting. In the second experience, student teachers were told about the upcoming substitutions well before they were to make the switch. Neither method helped calm the anxioty or seemed to devalue the experience. The only difference was that one group of student teachers had more time to stew about their upcoming substituting.

A third problem that coordinators for such a project should expect also stems from the the anxioty of the student teachers. On both occasions, student teachers were told not to contact the person whose class they were to substitute in. However, many students did make contacts and did discuss their new situations. These discussions were not, in themselves, a problem because student teachers undoubtedly benefitted from the discussions with each other. However, the discussions were not realistic of a typical substitute teaching situation.

A fourth problem was that the students tended to leave too many notes for each other. Our original worry was that there would be too few notes for the substitute student teachers. This worry was without substance. In cases where the student teachers had met before the switch, most of the notes were passed along orally. In one specific case where the student teacher did follow directions and did not contact the person with whom she was trading teaching assignments, the notes left for her were so great that she could not read through them even though she arrived at school ½ hour before classes started.

PROBLEMS TO AVOID

Our experiences suggest that student teachers should not be told too far ahead of the switch. The anxioty caused by telling the students early was great and, we believe, served no real purpose. We also suggest that coordinators, if possible, avoid making placements on ½-day time periods. In one instance, because the primary grades had early lunch hours, several student teachers had only about two hours with their new situations. Almost every student teacher complained about the ½-day experience.

Because school administrators were skeptical, we feel that it is best to implement the project in schools where a good understanding has been established between school personnel and university personnel. It is not difficult to imagine why school administrators would be hesitant to start large-scale substitutions, particularly when student teachers with limited experience are involved. Coordinators of such projects would be wise to be considerate of school personnel.

FOLLOW-UP

Because our research into this area has been exploratory in nature and because our thinking has developed as we have discussed and experimented, our follow-up activities to the experience were weak. Student teachers should, we believe, spend some time with one another after the experience discussing their perceptions of what took place during the substituting. In these discussions, student teachers probably can learn much from each other. Although we did not do systematic follow-up activities, we believe that such activities can only be beneficial to student teachers.

POSITIVE FEATURES AND UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES

As suggested in our objectives, our goals were to aid student teachers both in the process of leaving their own classrooms and working in another. The purpose of this exercise was managerial in large part and seemed to be fairly successful in meeting that goal. However, student teachers were

affected positively in terms of their own confidence. Before the experience student teachers were very apprehensive about the substituting. After the switch, student teachers expressed a great deal more confidence than they had before because the substitutions had gone so smoothly.

Many of the positive comments made after the substituting experience focused on how interesting and helpful it was to learn about another classroom by teaching in it. Some student teachers liked what they worked in, others did not; but, in every case their perspectives were broadened and they seemed to move closer to clarifying for themselves what approaches, organizations, and materials they preferred.

SUMMARY

We believe that substitute teaching is an area of educational life that desperately needs improvement. Most student teachers, although they may intend to substitute teach in hopes of obtaining a full-time teaching position, do not look on substitute teaching positively. Substitute teaching is one area, most student teachers suggest, where the minimum in education is expected. If a substitute teacher can "keep the students busy" their task is generally thought to be successful.

We believe that by including substitute teaching as an important aspect of undergraduate curriculum and instruction courses and by helping student teachers understand and work through some of the problems involved in both leaving and taking over a class, substitute teaching can be improved.

We believe that the description of one of our students does not have to be true when he states:

> "I have heard about those cases of flying chalk and chalkbrushes. Can you see those little rascals having absolutely no respect for you or what you are there to accomplish? Look on the bright side, you'll probably be there for a short period of time. Life isn't all that bad. Sit down, light up a smoke or have a cup of coffee and keep telling yourself that it's been fun and you wouldn't mind doing it again."

Dear Student Teacher,

In preparation for your change of classrooms, you will find several items attached.

(1) A list of assigned schools and cooperating teachers' classrooms for the change.

(2) A list of suggestions for preparing to leave your own room and for working in someone else's room.

(3) An evaluation form to be filled out for the student teacher whose place you took. This form should be completed and left in the room for the other student teacher before you leave, if possible. Otherwise it should be completed and returned to the student teacher as soon as possible.

(4) An evaluation form to be filled out for the university faculty consultant concerning the general value of this experience. This form should be completed in time to give to the faculty consultant during his/her visit to your school.

Please contact me any time before the change if you have questions.

Your Faculty Consultant,

SUGGESTIONS FOR "SUBSTITUTE" STUDENT TEACHERS

1. Arrive at school at least ½-hour before school starts.

2. Locate the folder left for you and all materials needed during the day (textbooks, maps, handouts, etc.)

3. Familiarize yourself with the daily schedule, room regulations, and the location of things in the building (office, lounge, rest rooms, library, cafeteria, etc.)

4. Check students' work before leaving if possible. If not, leave it so that it can be easily found by the regular student teacher.

5. If time permits, leave a brief written summary of how things went (how far you got in each area, any problems, etc.)

6. Fill out the evaluation form and leave it for the student teacher. (If time is short, take it with you and return it as soon as possible.)

SUBSTITUTE FOLDER ITEMS

Prepare a folder of items that a substitute would need to teach from. Some of the items needed are listed below. Please indicate the other items that you think would help a substitute teacher. You will exchange places with another student teacher for one day. That student teacher will use your substitute folder.

1. Name tags for all the children so that the substitute teacher can call on the students.
2. General room rules, such as how papers are handed in, whether children are expected to form lines, etc.
3. Schedule for that day including special classes, if there is a preparation period, what materials needed to be prepared, etc.
4. Lesson plans in the following form:
   a) Objectives
   b) Learning activities
   c) Evaluation of what was learned.
5. Attendance taking procedure for this school.
6. List of children who are to leave the room for special reasons.
7. An evaluation form to be filled out by the substitute teacher (we will provide this for your folder.)

EVALUATION BY SUBSTITUTE

Please indicate your ratings on the following check list.

Items Provided	Very easy to use	Easy to Use	Hard to Use	Couldn't Find	Other
1. Name tags					
2. Room rules					
3. Schedule					
4. Lesson plans					
5. Attendance sheets					
6. List of students with special reasons to leave room					

2. Please explain further about the above items that you had difficulty with.

3. What items would you like to see added to the substitute folder to make it better?

4. Which students had problems adapting to a substitute teacher?

5. List any other relevant comments about the experience.